

# Utilizing Patient Support Workers (PSWs) to provide Hemodialysis at Home

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## Purpose

To describe the outcomes of integration of unregulated workers to provide hemodialysis at home to patients who would have otherwise been dialyzed in a facility setting.

## Background

Humber River Hospital (HRH) is an community hospital with a comprehensive nephrology program encompassing the Multi-Care Kidney Clinic (MCKC), Transitional Care Unit (TCU), Home Dialysis Program, and In-Facility Hemodialysis.

The home dialysis program offers training for hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis. We have 91 prevalent hemodialysis and 84 prevalent peritoneal dialysis patients. The model of care entails primary nursing care with each nurse case managing 25 prevalent patients.

In 2015, under the leadership of Dr. Andreas Pierratos, the HHD program began to utilize unregulated workers to provide HD to patients at home. The patients in this program were patients who were hemodynamically stable on dialysis but benefited from home hemodialysis

The Ontario Renal Network (ORN) initiated the pilot program in 2016 and 11 centers were chosen for this project. Patient Support Workers (PSWs) from a selected agency was used in this project. Funding was provided by the ORN.

## Model of Care

The model of care for the PSW program was determined through stakeholders and the agency:

- The Home Dialysis Coordinator (HDC) was responsible for recruiting potential patients for the PSW program in collaboration with nephrologists, MCKC nurses and hemodialysis nurses.
- Once a patient was identified, the technologist and the HDC would conduct a home visit to determine the home's eligibility for dialysis.
- Patient or designate would sign the consent for home dialysis to initiate the home modification process
- The HDC would inform agency coordinator to recruit a PSW for the identified patient
- Once the PSW has been recruited, the PSW will go through a minimum of 21 training sessions with a home hemodialysis nurse
- The nurse will then certify the PSW for competency to provide care and the patient will be launched home
- PSWs worked 1:1 with patients

## Patient Selection Criteria

Initially, the intention was to choose patients with the potential for performing home hemodialysis on their own and to use the PSW as a means to transition into self-care.

In the process of recruitment, it was identified that there was a population of patients that benefitted greatly from increased frequency and longer duration dialysis but were unable to perform dialysis on their own or have a family member provide dialysis for them.

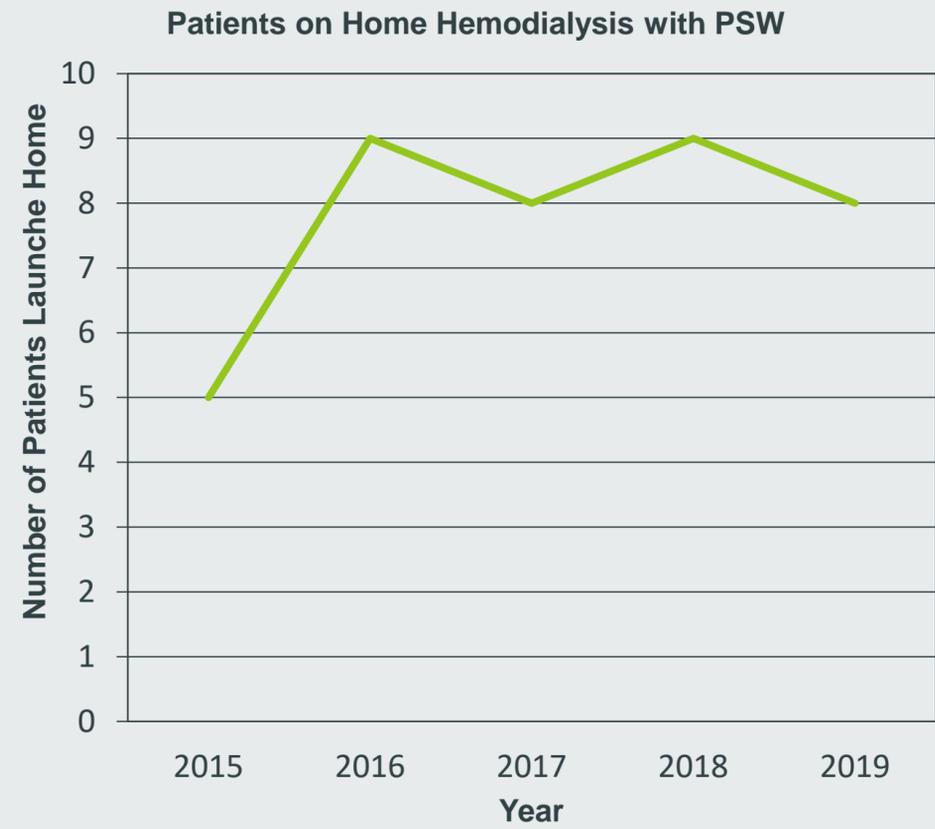
We began to recruit patients that had frequent readmissions to the hospital for dialysis related reasons and introduced them to the PSW program.

## PSW Selection Criteria

The agency was responsible for recruiting PSWs for the program. There was a good working relationship between the coordinator at the agency and the HDC.

PSWs applied to the position specifically with the intent of learning how to provide hemodialysis at home for patients.

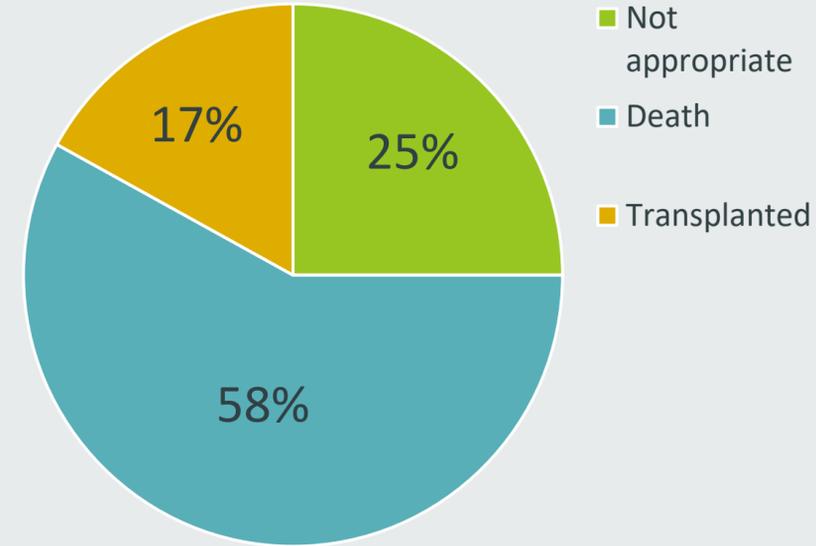
## Results



## Attrition

Like regular hemodialysis patients, between 2016-2019, natural attrition occurred over the years due to the factors below:

- 1) **Death:** Patients whom died on the program died of natural progression of diseases. This can be largely attributed to the fact that we were consciously selecting the patients that would benefit from daily dialysis the most and required home dialysis for increased quality of life.
- 2) **Not Appropriate:** Several patients were deemed inappropriate to continue on the program either due to increased burden of care at home or conflict between PSW and patient and/or family.
- 3) **Transplanted:** Most patients received deceased donor transplants.



## Lessons Learned

- PSW, patient and family compatibility and dynamics is very important. Mitigating the conflicts consumed a lot of resources.
- Expectations and responsibilities of the patient and family need to be clearly outlined at the beginning prior to training. We found that PSWs were being used for concerns outside of providing hemodialysis
- When we started the program, we were mistaken to only select patients that had potential to dialyze independently. The patient selection criteria need to be more flexible to include patients that benefited from home dialysis but were not conventional choices.

## Next Steps

- Continue recruitment for more patients for the PSW program
- Integrate new technologies that require less maintenance into the program to improve efficiency and patient safety
- Evaluate the impact of PSW and patient/family relationships on care provided
- Understand the power dynamic of patient/family over a PSW and their ability to provide proper care